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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

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TRENDS IN CLUB WORK AND WHAT LIES AHEAD*

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and Staff

We may congratulate ourselves this morning on the success of the 4-H club movement in the United States. Some of you leaders were in at the birth of the movement 25 or more years ago. All of you have had a part in shaping its destinies, developing its ideals, and building it up to its present membership of 1,000,000 rural youth and 106,000 volunteer lay leaders and sponsors of this work, made up of the finest men and women in America.

You have seen 4-H club work grow and become a part of the life of practically every rural county in the United States. It is the one phase of Extension that has the universal approval of all rural and urban people alike. It has the endorsement of the major farm organizations and of all religious creeds. It is a rural-youth-building, a nation-building enterprise. It is largely due to your guidance, your idealism, your own high character and that of your colleagues in Extension that 4-H club work has the respect and endorsement of all America and is being copied and promoted in many lands beyond the seas.

Springs do not rise above their source. You leaders here and those who came before you are the source of this movement. To you belongs credit for the distance we have come in 4-H club work and the height to which we have attained.

We are come together here this morning to consider trends in 4-H club work and to try, perhaps, to look a little way into the future. We shall deal, necessarily, with various details of our work. This may be a little monotonous, but the success of every great movement depends upon attention to details. It is because you have given attention, year after year, to these details that we have reached our present position in 4-H club work. Much of the detail in this paper that follows has been contributed by the club administrative, supervisory, and research staff of the office.

May we first consider trends in numbers. During the practically 25 years we have been engaged in promoting 4-H club work in an aggressive

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way as an extension enterprise, we have increased in numbers, on the average, about 40,000 a year.

The enrollment in 1935 of almost a million members was an increase of more than 100,000 over the average of the 5-year period of 1930-34, and more than 81,000 over the 1934 enrollment.

Only twice between 1915 and 1935 have there been periods of declining enrollment, and each of these declines lasted only 2 years. They occurred 1918 to 1920 following the war and a reduction in staff, and 1932 to 1934 following the depression.

The upward trend in enrollment has been uniform for both boys and girls. There has been an almost constant ratio of 3 girls for every 2 boys enrolled since these data were first available in 1923.

The increase in total enrollment has been due partly to the increase in county extension agents, but more particularly because the average agent enrolled a larger number of members.

The number of county extension agents increased 53 percent from 1920 to 1935. During the same period the number of members enrolled per county extension agent increased from 66 to 193, or 192 percent. The number of members enrolled per county extension agent reached the high point of 216 in 1932. It had decreased 14 percent by 1934, possibly due to the concentration of the agents on the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and relief work.

The average enrollment of 4-H club members per extension agent during the past 5 years has been 200. It is possible to maintain an even higher average 4-H club enrollment per extension agent. Two States have an average enrollment of more than 400 members per county extension agent, while 6 more are above the 300 mark. In contrast with these, there are 5 States that have an enrollment of less than 100 members per county extension agent. Seventeen of the States were above the 200 mark in 1935. We have examples in the United States where a single county agricultural agent has enrolled as many as 900 club members a year.

Percentage of completions has been widely used as one of the measures of successful 4-H club work. The necessary data to determine this were first available in 1923. Percentage of completions has shown an encouraging and steady increase from 54.33 percent in 1923 to 70.7 percent in 1935.

There are 16 States that had more than 80 percent of the 4-H club members completing their projects in 1935, and in 2 States less than 50 percent of the 4-H club members completed their work. One State with a substantial enrollment that has maintained more than 90 percent completion for a number of years stands as an example of what can be done in this respect. We probably should look forward to about 80 percent of completions in our future plans.

Another measure of the effectiveness of 4-H club work has been the length of time that the young people continue as members. Members who find the work interesting and helpful will enroll again the following year.

This may be expressed by the percentage of members who reenroll. There has been a very slight trend toward a higher percentage of reenrollment among the girls during the 1930 to 1934 period. In 1935 the reenrollment for both boys and girls was higher than in any year between 1930 to 1934.

Increased reenrollment over a period of years will mean an increased length of membership.

Again, the difference between the States is significant. Some States have a high percentage of reenrollment, while others are very low in this respect. There were 10 States in which more than 65 percent of the 1934 members were still members in 1935. In contrast, there were 10 States in which less than 50 percent of the 1934 members continued the work in 1935.

Although the percentage of reenrollment showed an increase in 1935, an analysis of the data available for the 6-year period 1930-1935 fails to indicate any significant progress in increasing length of membership. For boys and girls the country over, the average length of membership is 2.4 years, with boys continuing for 2.5 years and girls for 2.3 years.

Expressed in another way, 42 out of every 100 4-H members enroll for only one year. Twenty-two continue for 2 years, 14 stop during or at the end of their third year's work, 9 continue for 4 years, and 12 are members for 5 years or longer.

The 5 high States have an average length of membership of approximately 3 years. Only 27 percent drop out after the first year; 24 percent continue for 2 years; 17 percent enroll 3 times; 12 percent 4 times; and 20 percent, or one fifth of the boys and girls enrolled by these 5 States, continue their association with 4-H club work for 5 years or longer. Here is something worth striving for.

Contrast these 5 high States with 5 low States that have an average length of membership of only 1.78 years. Out of every 100 members, 60 drop their 4-H work during or at the end of the first year; 21 continue for 2 years; 10 for 3 years; 4½ for 4 years; and only 4.7 out of the 100 members enroll for 5 years or longer.

The States that have a low 4-H club enrollment often justify it on the grounds that larger numbers would mean a lower quality of work. The data available seem to show the opposite to be true. The 15 States with the lowest enrollment per county extension agent have a lower average percentage of completion and lower average percentage of reenrollment than the States with larger enrollment. This does not necessarily mean that large enrollment is the reason for high completion or for high reenrollment.

It does mean that States have developed large enrollments without any loss in the quality of the work they are doing. It is likely that the States which recognize the value of 4-H club work by getting large enrollments also recognize that a high quality of work is worth while. At least they have developed quality and volume at the same time.

The average enrollment in 1934 for a county by a county club agent was approximately 700, while the average combined enrollment of an average county agricultural and home demonstration agent was but approximately 500.

Because of a desire to reach the 16 to 20 age group with an extension program, considerable interest has been shown in the age of the young people that 4-H club work is reaching. Roughly speaking, out of every 10 members, 4 are 10 to 12 years of age; 4 are 13 to 15 years; and 2 are 16 to 20. Many people are asking the question, "Is 4-H work making any progress in reaching the 16-20 age group?" In the case of both boys and girls, the percentage of members in the older group increased slightly each year from 1930 to 1933. From 1933 to 1935, there has been a slight decrease. The data fail to show a trend in either direction. At present, 20 percent of club members are 16-20 years of age.

As to age trends, the tendency seems to be to enroll boys and girls when slightly younger. This may help to increase length of membership, as other studies have shown that those who start young stay in 4-H club work longer than those who begin after they are 12 or 13 years of age.

We may consider here, perhaps as well as anywhere in this paper, the question of what should be our ultimate annual goal in 4-H club membership. There are about 12,000,000 rural youth 10-20 years of age. It would appear from the record for 1935 that, if we could continue that record of enrollment for a 10-year period, keeping each member in the work about 2-1/2 years, we would be reaching with club work during each 10-year period about 36 percent of all rural youth. We cannot probably hope ever to reach all rural youth, but the Nation should plan to reach with its 4-H club work probably at least 70-80 percent of all rural youth in each decade of time and keep them in the work an average of 2-1/2 to 3 years. To do that, we should ultimately enroll annually about 2,400,000 rural youth 10-20 years of age.

How long should it take us to reach that goal of 2,400,000 rural youth each year? It has taken us 25 years to enroll a million members annually; but a snowball accumulates more rapidly as it grows larger, so in the years before us, if extension could increase its membership 6-8 percent annually, or around 80 to 90 thousand new members each year, it could reach its tentative goal of 2,400,000 members annually in around 12 to 15 years. That probably is as fast as we can grow and keep healthy, maintaining at the same time, or raising, our club standards and finding and training high-grade leaders to sponsor and guide each club. If we can enroll 2,000,000 to 2,400,000 rural youth 10-20 years of age annually and keep them in club work for $2\frac{1}{2}$-3 years each on the average, we can

reach close to 80 percent of all the rural youth of the Nation in any particular decade with the achievement and guidance and outlook on life that 4-H club work gives.

These plans may seem a little large, but I believe they are possible plans and can be safely predicted on what has been accomplished in the past 25 years; but we must remember we have already enrolled those easiest to enroll, and future increases in membership probably will not be so easy as enrollments already made.

The biggest factors in the accomplishment of this goal are that every county agricultural and home demonstration agent in every State shall be given such council, help, and guidance from club forces as will stimulate county agents to give some time to the promotion and work of 4-H clubs; that the Extension Service shall grow so that there are at least 3 or more agents in every county of the United States having as many as 1,000 farmers; and that all extension agents, including the supervisory staff and extension specialists, shall give a substantial part of their time, approximately one-third, to the promotion of club work. It appears that in 1934 there were practically 800 county agricultural agents who did not report any work done with 4-H clubs. Club forces and extension directors have a problem in helping these agents see the value of 4-H club work and encouraging them to make it a part of their program.

Nearly all home demonstration agents are doing some work with 4-H clubs, and your speaker has faith that extension forces will grow in numbers in all the counties throughout the entire Nation, because extension is giving something stimulating and vital to country life, something that will make people desire it in increasing measure. In the long run, people have about what they want, and practically every rural family in America want 4-H club work for their children and want adult extension for themselves.

In this connection, club extension forces must be broad enough to help develop in this work all extension and to see that the club program in any community fits into the general agricultural and home program of the community. Extension is a multiple-hitch organization and all its forces must pull in the team together if all are to grow and accomplish most.

Going back, now, to a continuation of our theme of trends, we find the number of 4-H clubs per extension agent showing but little change during the past 10 years. The number of members per club has increased from an average of 13 in 1924 to an average of 16 per club in 1934 and 1935. The number of leaders per club, however, has increased from one leader in 1924 to 1.8 leaders per club, or 18 leaders for every 10 clubs. Not only that, but in 1935 the average leader attended more than twice as many leader-training schools as in 1927.

Data on the number of 4-H club meetings held by 4-H clubs and conducted by a local leader with no agent present were first reported in 1930.

In 6 years the number of meetings held by the average club without the agent in attendance increased 75 percent, from 2.5 to 4.4.

The increased use of local leaders indicated by these trends probably is one of the most important methods that have been used to increase not only the volume but also the quality of 4-H club work.

It would further appear that demonstration and judging teams are greatly increasing in 4-H club work. Since 1923 there has been an increase of 446 percent in the number of demonstration teams, while the number of judging teams has increased 715 percent during the same period.

In 1923 only one 4-H club in 10 had a judging team and 1 in 4 a demonstration team. In 1935, 1 out of every 2 clubs had a judging team and 2 out of every 3 clubs had demonstration teams.

We might go on considering further trends in 4-H club work; but this paper is already growing too long and there are some special matters I want to touch upon. I asked our staff to list some of the more important things that had been added to club work in the past 10 or 15 years; and these are some of the things that, in their judgment, have been added:

Enrichment of program through recreational, musical, and cultural activities, social behavior, and personality development.

Integration and understanding of the health phase of the 4-H club program.

Alignment of 4-H club objectives with general aims of education, followed by better teaching procedures based upon principles of education, and psychology of youth and adults.

Greater appreciation of our surroundings through nature study, camps, forestry projects, and the introduction of conservation projects and programs.

Training in group discussion technique.

Definite progress in the development of programs for older young people.

Use of radio in 4-H club programs.

Four-H club leaders' associations and councils.

Community sponsoring or advisory committees.

Handicraft and farm and home engineering.

Surveys and appraisal of values in 4-H club program by persons and agencies other than Extension Service.

Report of the Land-Grant College Committee on "Recommended Policies Governing 4-H Club Work."

Club work is mobile. It is enlarging and enriching its program. Much has been added to club work since its founding by the fathers.

We have long held that 4-H club work is character-building. What do outsiders think of it?

Hartshorne and May of Yale University have stated that 4-H club work is one of the greatest character-building agencies in America. This was found to be true largely because the activities of 4-H club members are built upon actual life situations on the farm, in the home, school, or community. In meeting these life situations in individual project work and club group activities, important choices and far-reaching decisions are made which give definite character training through the formation of good habits in thinking and acting.

Hartshorne and Pendry, in their recent book, Organizations for Youth (McGraw-Hill Book Co.), state the following:

> "The 4-H club work, although not organized with character education as the specific end in view is functioning to this end, and, therefore, deserves a prominent place in this summary of character education procedures. The fact that its activities are wholly integrated with the economic life of the community is one of the fundamental causes of its great value as a character-building program. Each boy or girl interested is consciously and intelligently working as a part of the progressive citizenry of the county, State, or Nation. This consciousness of his own importance and of the importance of the activity in the welfare of the community leads him to manifest those qualities of worth and integrity which make character."

Germane and Germane of the University of Missouri, writing on "Projects in Moral Education", (Missouri Extension Circular 538) scientifically tested and measured at various times over a period of eight months a typical Missouri 4-H Baby Beef Club and reported that the following positive character trends were developed: "self-reliance, industry and responsibility (in doing their own work); initiative and creative thinking (in planning work and meeting obstacles); thrift, judgment, honesty and accuracy (in buying and selling animals and keeping records); patience, carefulness, vision, perseverance and stick-to-it-iveness (in working on a long-time goal); cooperation and respect for others (in showing own animals, in reaching club goals and seeing what others can do."

Now, a word as to the future of club work:

The thing that distinguishes 4-H club work from the work of all other youth organizations is that it is based on doing worth-while pieces of work on the farm and in the home or community in a better way. In our effort to

enrich the club program with recreation, music, social activities, nature study, etc., we must never forget that the greatest value of club work probably arises from the fact that in it we teach youth to work, to do something with their own hands, to do it in a better way, to achieve through their own efforts; then to keep a record of such work, tell about it, demonstrate it, exhibit it, make it a part of their lives.

Doing a piece of work that amounts to something, a piece of work that is worth while, work that is needed, that is significant on the farm, in the home or the neighborhood - that, it seems to me, is the genius of 4-H club work now and in the future. That is something that, in all our efforts to enrich club work, we must not overlook or forget. It is a basic part of 4-H club work. Without this vital touch of working with the earth and the home and the community, 4-H club work would lose the element that has been the secret of its growth.

We are giving increasing thought to retaining the older youth in our 4-H club membership, and this is probably wise. We want to train our own leaders. In your speaker's thinking, however, we should not divert too much of our effort to this field. We now have over 200,000 club members 16 to 20 years old in club work. We can increase this number by enrolling a larger number of 10- to 15-year-old members we take in, and maybe that is the best strategy. We do want to provide a more advanced program for the older group, and it may be that in some cases we shall want to add older groups beyond the club ages; but, with our present limited funds and limited extension forces, and with our limited knowledge of what to do or how to organize this older group, we probably will accomplish far more with our money and staff if we continue to give most emphasis to the enrollment of the younger members of our group. Should not our greatest membership drive be for the 12- to 15-year-olds, then keep them in the work as long as they can profit by it? Let's not worry too much about the 20- to 24-year-olds. We can study their needs and problems and perhaps eventually do something for them in a big way, but meanwhile we have a clientele and a big job of our own. Let's give this present going 4-H club organization our first and best and most continuous thought and carry this group into advanced positions.

We are sound in our efforts to try to enrich club work with wholesome recreation, with music appreciation, with nature appreciation, and with more social life. We are sound in our efforts to encourage 4-H club members to express themselves in writing and speaking, through parliamentary practice, committee assignments, participation in bands, choruses, plays, readings, and the like.

We are sound in our efforts to encourage club members to give attention to their personal appearance, manners, behavior, personality. We are sound in our efforts to develop in club members a sense of fairness, sportsmanship, common honesty, truthfulness, kindness, reverence for God.

We are sound in our efforts to instill into 4-H club members industry, ambition, a desire to learn, to go forward, to be something, to accomplish something.

Holding fast to all the things that have brought us to our present high estate, let us intensify our work, keep abreast of the times, and go forward.

We represent the greatest and most significant movement in rural America today. We shall make improvements and additions in the future, as we have in the past; but we are fundamentally sound now.

For the future, we need more county extension agents. We need 2,000 county club agents. We need all extension forces giving about one-third of their time to club work. We need still more local leaders and assistants and must give them more training. We need an enlarged program for the older members of our clubs. We need to get more members into our clubs before they reach 15 years of age and to keep them an average of at least 3 years. We need to increase the cultural and religious side of our work and, last of all, we need the most outstanding men in America as State leaders to continue the organization and guidance of this great movement. There is no larger job.

May I close with the thought I left with you the other evening:

> "Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood,******.
>
> "Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram, once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency."

Make big plans.

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